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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 001509

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USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION PUTIN-HU TALKS - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: A front-page report from Washington in Thursday morning's Sankei quoted a USG source as saying that Deputy Secretary Zoellick and Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Joseph have informally asked the GOJ to suspend Japan's development of Iran's Azadegan oil field, adding that US-Japan relations could suffer serious friction depending on how Tokyo reacts to Washington's request.

¶1. "Russia, China Aiming for Self-Interest and Containment of US Domination" An editorial in the business daily Nihon Keizai commented (3/23): "Russian President Putin visited China Tuesday and agreed with Chinese President Hu to strengthen bilateral economic ties and seek peaceful solutions to the Iranian and North Korean nuclear issues. China and Russia are strengthening their relations in the hope of containing US unipolar rule and pursuing their respective self-interests in such areas as energy development. Although there is no need to worry about the revival of their one-time military alliance, the US and Japan should keep a close watch on future China-Russian ties and step up their involvement with both countries...."

¶2. "Although Russia and China are making their relationship out to be a 'honeymoon,' their ties are focused on self-interest and are businesslike in tone.... At the individual level, Russians remain wary of China.... The Russian government is not selling to China weapons that could threaten the security of Russia. Russia and China are not as 'monolithic' as they were during the Cold War, but if Western nations band together to take a hard-line stance against the two countries, they may seek to further strengthen their ties. The West should take a 'carrot and stick' approach depending on

the issue."

¶3. "Russia and China Should Not Forget Their Responsibilities as Major Powers" The liberal Asahi editorialized (3/23): "Russian President Putin visited Beijing for talks with Chinese President Hu. It was Mr. Putin's fourth visit to the Chinese capital since he became president six years ago, while Mr. Hu has visited Russia twice.... President Bush recently visited India and Pakistan, while Secretary of State Rice visited Sydney for a trilateral meeting with the Japanese and Australian foreign ministers. Given these developments in the 'great game,' it is hardly surprising that Russia and China would seek to deepen their relationship. Self-interest is the driving force behind the ties between Beijing and Moscow.

¶4. "China needs Russian oil and natural gas to meet its growing energy needs and Russian arms to modernize its military. Russia, meanwhile, can benefit economically by providing these things while also shoring up its position in Asia.... A second factor is the United States. It is difficult for any one country to stand up to the world's sole superpower. As both Russia and China are permanent members of the UN Security Council, they can join hands to bolster their influence and resist the US. In fact, the two nations' interests regarding the US may be closely aligned in a number of areas. Russia, for instance, would like to see an end to the US military presence in central Asia that resulted from the Afghan war and to head off any US interference in the Chechen conflict, while China is also eager to keep the US from interfering with the Taiwan issue."

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SCHIEFFER